

WASHINGTON, DC—Representative Steve Driehaus today announced that the House of Representatives has passed legislation he introduced to promote accountability and openness in government. The Reducing Information Control Designations Act (H.R. 1323) would establish regulations to make the government's process for classifying information more efficient, and to make government information more easily available to the public.

“This is an important step in our work to make government more open, efficient, and accountable. Unclassified government information should be easy to access, but the current jumble of pseudo-classifications results in a roadblock for the public and poor information sharing among government agencies. My legislation would streamline the way we control information, helping to break down the bureaucracy between the people and their government,” said Rep. Driehaus.

House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chair Edolphus Towns (D-NY) and Ranking Member Darrell E. Issa (R-CA) spoke in support of Rep. Driehaus's bill on the House floor before it was passed by voice vote this afternoon.

Currently, government agencies control documents and information using a wide range of information control designations, known as pseudo-classifications, such as “for official use only” or “sensitive but unclassified.” No overarching regulations govern how these pseudo-classifications should be used, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has reported that pseudo-classifications make it more difficult for government agencies to share information with one another and for the public to access government information.

The Reducing Information Control Designations Act would create a common language for the way government controls information. The legislation would require the Archivist of the United States to put in place regulations pertaining to information control designations. The bill would charge federal agency heads with implementing these regulations and empower government inspectors to conduct audits to ensure that regulations were being followed. Additionally, the legislation would create training programs for those with the authority to control information.

March 15-21 is Sunshine Week, a national initiative to open a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include print, broadcast and online news media, civic groups, libraries, non-profits, and schools.